

## Southern Appalachian Creature Feature Podcasts

### Red Wolf Death

Greetings and welcome to the Southern Appalachian Creature Feature.

Red wolves are the wolves of the south. They could once be found from Texas, across the south, and up the Atlantic coast. However, due to eradication efforts and habitat loss, they nearly became extinct. In a last-ditch effort to save the species, an attempt was made to capture all remaining wild red wolves. Of the 17 captured, 14 became the founders of a zoo-based breeding program. Although the release of propagated wolves was tried and failed in Great Smoky Mountains National Park, it has been a success in the swampy low country of eastern North Carolina, where about 100 red wolves roam. Nearly 200 additional red wolves are in captivity and part of the managed breeding program. You can see these animals for yourself at the Western North Carolina Nature Center in Asheville.

Unfortunately, someone appears to be targeting those wolves. On January 7 a red wolf was found with an apparent gunshot wound. This was the first red wolf death of 2014, though in 2013 there were nine confirmed or suspected gunshot deaths. Red wolves are protected under the Endangered Species Act as an experimental, non-essential population. This status means they can be legally killed in the defense of livestock or pets, and they can be killed incidentally to any type of legal activity. However, they cannot otherwise be killed in an intentional or willful manner. Anyone with information about the deaths is asked to call law enforcement at 404/763-7959.

For WNCW and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, this is Gary Peeples.